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# Problematizing the Presence of Realism in the Structure of the United Nations

by

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*Declaration*

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Date: ~~Sept~~. 18, 2002

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## *Abstract*

Throughout the history of humankind, different prevailing ontological structures have dictated the form and content of all agents within that structure whether they are flesh and blood politicians or cement and mortar institutions. As time passes, friction occurs between those agents whose lives span two consecutive structures. From this we can reason that international organizations that were created during one order but are operating in another may embody certain inconsistencies that both limit the organization's ability to function in the second structure and also illuminate the phase of transformation that the institution is undergoing.

The United Nations (UN), undeniably the largest in depth and reach of all international organizations, is one such agent. It was created during the ascendancy of the realist *modus operandi* (a theory of international relations that is the extension of the Westphalian tradition) because at that time interests could be compartmentalized into neatly defined territories. But the UN is now faced with the issues of an era where mutual concerns, such as the Women's Empowerment Movement, touch every corner of the earth.

This paper represents an effort to highlight the Westphalian and realist features of the United Nations. It submits that the UN promotes a Westphalian and realist view of world order in that its charter, structure and administration reflect the principles put forth by the realist school of thought. It is my contention that certain realist ideas (namely the belief that states are the only significant political actors and the sovereignty of governments to rule their territory without interference from another political actor) are problematic for the United Nations' commitment to maintaining world peace, preserving human rights, and improving the socio-economic status of disadvantaged peoples.

The thesis is structured as follows: the first chapter examines the historical and theoretical factors that shaped the realist view of world order, namely the emergence of the state system and the Anglo-American ideology that accompanied it. Chapter Two traces the UN's realist underpinnings by linking the various components of the UN's structure with its ideological roots in Realism. It takes the UN Charter as the primary evidence of the contradictions inherent in the UN system. The final chapter identifies the areas where the UN's adherence to realist prescriptions has rendered it largely ineffective in an increasingly interdependent global atmosphere.

## INTRODUCTION

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The famous proverb: "it's a small world" has never seemed truer. To avoid confusion it should be noted that it is not the physical mass of the world that seems to be shrinking but the spaces between its inhabitants. In the last century, but especially in the last fifty years, the world has been experiencing a technological revolution that is removing the barriers that limited human interaction for thousands of years. Whereas a century ago, if someone in Washington had something urgent to tell someone in Beijing, only one option existed -- write the message down on paper, put it on a ship heading in that direction, and wait a long time. The same person today could write a letter that would arrive the next day, send a fax, email, or instant message, or talk directly via satellite telephone. In addition to increasing the facility with which we interact, our newfound intimacy has come with a few strings, most notably the vulnerability to economic, nuclear, and environmental catastrophe. Like it or not, the world is fast becoming one, problems that were once local and had local consequences are now systemic problems with systemic consequences.

The increased interconnectedness with which the world's citizens now find each other has also had a tremendous impact on global management. Up until this time, the world has operated within a Westphalian system, so-called after the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which put to rest the church's claims to political authority in Europe and organized the world into separate units called *states* with clearly demarcated boundaries. In the eyes of their European creators, each state's government had the supreme and sovereign power within its boundaries and states' mutual respect for each other's sovereignty was generally regarded as the fundamental principle of the system. But the networking of the planet complicated the meticulous organization of the Westphalian model of world order because interests were no longer confined to neatly defined territorial spaces.<sup>1</sup>

The demand for an improved scheme of governance sparked a fad in global politics: international organization. As a result, contemporary international relations is characterized by a multitude of such bodies whose primary charge is to manage trans-border exchanges. Well over a thousand intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) having states as their members are in existence today, not to mention the much greater number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), composed of private citizens in various countries. The proliferation of these agencies has necessitated its own organization, the Union of International Associations (UIA), to keep track of them all. The International Medical Alliance, the International Maritime Bureau, the International Forum for Child Welfare, and the International Avocado Society are just a few examples of the members

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<sup>1</sup> According to Richard Falk, *world order* can be defined as "a set of concepts and images that appear useful for generalizing our experience of the world. These concepts and images are themselves the product of dominant cultural traditions, reflecting the thought and belief of several centuries." Richard Falk. *A Study of Future Worlds*. (New York: The Free Press, 1975) 57

boasted by UIA that illustrate the amazing variety in size, structure and scope of international organizations.

An in depth analysis of the evolution of international organizations from their pioneers in the early part of the twentieth century would reveal that each one bears the markings of the paradigm from which it originated. International relations scholar Inis Claude has made a similar observation remarking that “international organization is a process and international organizations are representative aspects of the phase of that process which has been reached at a given time.”<sup>2</sup> With the help of other spectators of the global political scene we can gain better insight into how these institutions become manifestations of their particular historical period. Robert Cox enlightens us by explaining that “the ontologies that people work with derive from their historical experience and in turn become embedded in the world they construct. These embedded structures are the larger context in which institutions are located.” He makes the further point that: “These . . . structures of thought and practice – the non physical realities of political and social life – may persist over long periods of time, only to become problematic, to be called into question, when people confront new sets of problems that the old ontologies do not seem able to account for or cope with.”<sup>3</sup> But why can’t the old ontologies cope with the new ones? To answer this question Cox uncovers another a twist in the plot: “Distinctive historical phases, with their historically specific ontologies, are not sealed off from one another as mutually incomprehensible or mutually irrelevant

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<sup>2</sup> Inis Claude. *Swords into Plowshares*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Random House, 1971) 4

<sup>3</sup> Robert Cox. “Toward a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order: Reflections on the Relevancy of Ibn Khaldun.” in James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds. *Governance without government: order and change in world politics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) 133

constructs. Historical phases in our own current of civilization are produced, one following the other, in a process of contradiction. The contradictions and conflicts that arise within any established structure create the opportunity for its transformation into a new structure.”<sup>4</sup> In this last sentence, Cox offers the solution to the problem he presented earlier: detecting the contradictions present in a given moment of transformation can be used as the jumping off point for making the institution conform to the current structure.

To recap: throughout the history of humankind, different prevailing ontological structures have dictated the form and content of all agents within that structure whether they be flesh and blood politicians or cement and mortar institutions. As time passes, friction occurs between those agents whose lives span two consecutive structures. From this we can reason that international organizations that were created during one order but are operating in another may embody certain inconsistencies that both limit the organization’s ability to function in the second structure and also illuminate the phase of transformation that the institution is undergoing.

The United Nations (UN), undeniably the largest in depth and reach of all international organizations, is one such agent. It was created during the ascendancy of the realist *modus operandi* (a theory of international relations that is the extension of the Westphalian tradition) because at that time interests could be compartmentalized into neatly defined territories. But the UN is now faced with the issues of an era where mutual

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<sup>4</sup> Cox, “Toward a Post-Hegemonic Conceptualization of World Order,” 134

concerns, such as the Women's Empowerment Movement, touch every corner of the earth.

This paper represents an effort to highlight the Westphalian and realist features of the United Nations. It submits that the UN promotes a Westphalian and realist view of world order in that its charter, structure and administration reflect the principles put forth by the realist school of thought. It is my contention that certain realist ideas (namely the belief that states are the only significant political actors and the sovereignty of governments to rule their territory without interference from another political actor) are problematic for the United Nations' commitment to maintaining world peace, preserving human rights, and improving the socio-economic status of disadvantaged peoples.

The thesis is structured as follows: the first chapter examines the historical and theoretical factors that shaped the realist view of world order, namely the emergence of the state system and the Anglo-American ideology that accompanied it. It examines the social and philosophical forces shaping this ideology and their influence on the political sphere, which gave birth to the modern system of states which is recognizable today. The chapter then lays out the basic principles of realism that form the coordinates of the current system of global governance. The last part of the chapter adopts a neo-constructivist lens in order to view realism and the international system that followed from it as merely one approach to global governance, constructed by various ontological factors that are by no means the only feasible approach.

Chapter Two traces the UN's realist underpinnings by linking the various components of the UN's structure with its ideological roots in Realism. It takes the UN Charter as the primary evidence of the contradictions inherent in the UN system. From the Charter it is evident that the founders of the UN were attempting to transcend the habits of power politics which they believed had precipitated two world wars by committing itself to protecting human rights and operating according to the doctrine of collective security. But because the same individuals were themselves products of the realist era, they also included in the Charter items that would preserve state sovereignty. This chapter highlights the inconsistencies within the UN's design that would paralyze it in the decades that followed its creation.

The final chapter identifies the areas where the UN's adherence to realist prescriptions has rendered it largely ineffective in an increasingly interdependent global atmosphere. The first part of the chapter looks at how the multitude of new actors such as IGOs and NGOs that are wielding influence in the global political arena are challenging the monopoly of power once held by states alone. The second part highlights the incompatibility between the sovereignty of national governments guaranteed by the UN Charter and its endeavor to preserve human rights. It also discusses how sovereignty, in making aid to other countries and action against aggression voluntary, removes any obligation for states to help each other. The third part analyzes the problems that arise from the preeminence of the Security Council in the UN and its purporting to function according to a collective security scheme. The outcome is two-fold. First, the UN has become an agent of the interests of the permanent members of the Security Council.

Under this arrangement, the political and economic models of the most powerful nations are exported (“one-size-fits-all”) to other societies which is destructive because it leads to the misguided impression that the perspectives of other societies are somehow inferior.<sup>5</sup> The other problem is simply that Western models can often be inappropriate in non-Western societies.

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<sup>5</sup> Kinhide Mushakoji, “Multilateralism in a Multicultural World: notes for a theory of occultation.” in Robert Cox, ed. *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order*. (Paris, New York, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997) xxii

## CHAPTER ONE

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### THE ORIGINS OF WESTPHALIA AND ITS PROGRESSION INTO REALISM

There are several basic observations to be made about the contemporary international system. One can see that the world is composed of separate units known as states, that each state has a government that represents (in the eyes of the inter-state community) the views of its citizens. Governments manage the affairs of their states, and are constantly making agreements with each other and engaging in armed conflict when these agreements fail. Because this inter-state system has dominated the last three centuries, it is easy to assume that it offers the only description of world order and it is harder to view it as the product of a particularly realist paradigm. As the UN and its most problematic features embody this tradition, it is useful to map the inter-state system's origins and evolution.

Chapter One, divided into three parts, examines the realist foundations upon which the UN was built. The first part examines the relevant political, economic, social and ideological circumstances of seventeenth century western Europe that contributed to the

formation of the *modern state system* that we recognize today.<sup>6</sup> The second part of the chapter discusses the main features of the realist theory of international relations to introduce the ideological foundations upon which the UN was built (these are more comprehensively discussed in Chapter Two). I am aware that a discussion of the origins of the state system is by no means a new inquiry. But as the core of my argument posits that the shortcomings of the UN lie in its devotion to realist principles that are no longer appropriate, I believe it is imperative to understand how, and in what context, the current system was constructed. Otherwise, one might assume that the current system and the ideas it infused into the UN are the only possible configurations of world order. More importantly, such an assumption would make it difficult to embrace and implement a new approach to global governance. Parts One and Two therefore describe the *parts* and *whole* of the modern international system respectively. Part Three uses Alexander Wendt's Constructivist theory to show how the parts of the system and the system itself reinforce each other. Constructivism challenges one to see realism as a particular organization of ideas that offers one method for how the world should be governed, but is by no means the only prospect. This will highlight the faults of the current system that are present in the UN and the necessity for its reformation.

As an overall objective, Chapter One encourages the view that the modern state system is a construction of time-specific and culturally-specific beliefs. Most historical reenactments of the origins of the state system choose the Treaty of Westphalia as their

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<sup>6</sup> Ruggie uses the Treaty of Westphalia, established in 1648, to mark the beginning of the *modern state system*. John G. Ruggie. "Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations." *International Organization*. Vol. 47, No. 1. (Winter 1993)

starting point of inquiry because it formally established the modern conception of the state and the system. I explore the underpinnings of the Treaty in greater detail for it is my belief that an understanding of the *parts* of something enhances one's understanding of the *whole*. I also elucidate the elements of the current global structure that contributed to its own making as well as the institutions such as the UN within it.

#### PART ONE: THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE AND THE MODERN SYSTEM OF STATES

As it was conceived in seventeenth century western Europe, the state was a fusion of various economic, ideological, and political elements interacting over a time period spanning the end of the Medieval period to the beginning of the Renaissance. I have identified three factors that were salient to the emergence of differentiated and mutually exclusive territorial states: economic expansion which broke down existing frontiers and necessitated more contained territories, social disturbances which strained the existing social order and demanded a new one based on secular ideas, and the political transformation that stamped secular ideas onto the political sphere.

In the seventeenth century, Europe was restless. A bird's eye view of the continent would have shown "a patchwork of overlapping frontiers" controlled non-exclusively by familial monarchies and religious authorities.<sup>7</sup> An economic growth spurt was eroding the territorial formations to accommodate the transfer of resources across the continent and the territorial rulers wanted to upgrade their internal security from the traditional mercenary-kind to a standing army to protect the economic environment. Maintaining

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 149

standing armies required more capital, which in turn necessitated more economic growth and more protection. The Medieval system's disjointed political organization, however, did not provide the desired economic security. As Hendrick Spruyt points out, mutually exclusive states won over the Medieval version "because their institutional logic gave them an advantage in mobilizing their society's resources."<sup>8</sup> As the economy was growing and becoming more of a focal point of society, the European social order was also undergoing a transformation. Up to this time, the Church had been a guiding force in all aspects of life but a new ideology challenged the Pope's political predominance.

Three events facilitated western Europe's divorce from a firm adherence to religious principles and introduced it to the importance of logic and reason, ideas that became the coordinates of the modern state system. The first of these events were the famines, droughts, and disease that swept the continent during the Middle Ages. According to Ruggie, these disasters "creat[ed] a new matrix of constraints and opportunities" for philosophers to introduce new ideas about what society is and how it works.<sup>9</sup> The second and third events that dramatically altered society were the Enlightenment and the subsequent secularization of Europe. Undoubtedly one of the most profound episodes in European history, the Enlightenment introduced the principles which guided Europe's development (and eventually the world's) ever since. The proponents of the Enlightenment encouraged people to believe that social welfare, moral progress, and general happiness could be attained through one's own capacities by using reason, logic

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<sup>8</sup> Hendrick Spruyt. *The Sovereign State and its Competitors*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 185

<sup>9</sup> Ruggie, 155

and rational thinking.<sup>10</sup> These traits were considered a more reliable method of navigating life's decisions as they followed objective rules and patterns and not solely Divine intervention. Up to this point, global relations had also been governed by religious decrees. The Enlightenment imprinted politics with these same secular ideas about reason, thus replacing the political system that was dominated by the Church with one governed by direct consent between rulers.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, philosophers had endowed the European populace and politicians with a legacy of opinion concerning the nature of the individual's role in society. The mainstream thinking, promulgated especially by John Locke depicted society as a collection of equal and separate units, or people, motivated by self-interest.<sup>12</sup> Locke claimed that:

Men being . . . by nature all free, equal and independent, no one can be put out of his estate and be subjected to the political power of another without his own consent which is done by agreeing with other men, to join and unite into a community for their comfortable, safe, and peaceable living, one amongst another, in a secure enjoyment of their properties, and a greater security against any that are not of it.<sup>13</sup>

Since people were self-interested, a prosperous society would follow if these individuals entered into a contract with a minimal government that would protect those rights. The Treaty of Westphalia which organized political space into equal and separate territories cemented the central idea of Locke's claim into the political sphere.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 145

<sup>11</sup> Richard Falk. *Explorations at the Edge of Time: The Prospects of a New World Order*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988) 38. Glenn Chafetz, Micheal Spirtas, Benjamin Frankel, eds. *The Origins of National Interests*. (London, Oregon: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1999) 152

<sup>12</sup> Ruggie, 158

<sup>13</sup> John Locke. "An essay concerning the true original, extent and end of civil government." *Social Contract*, 1667 in Sir Ernest Barker. *Social Contract: Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) Article 94

The basic components of the current system of states can be found in the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which ended the Thirty Years War and inaugurated what is considered by most international relations scholars to be the modern era. The essence of the Treaty declared that Europe would from that point forward be constituted exclusively by clearly demarcated territorial units called states. While these territorial realms were by no means sealed, they were the basis on which states would build their political, legal and social institutions. The government of each state was charged with protecting the liberties of individuals and facilitating their internal economies.<sup>14</sup>

The Treaty represented a clear advance over the status quo. It took the philosophical principle that humankind was composed of equal and separate individuals and applied it to the political sphere by dividing the world into separate states. These states would act rationally with each other based, not on religious decrees, but on direct and consensual agreements. The idea of sovereignty, that one individual could not encroach on another's rights was also carried over into the Treaty whereby the government of each state would have sole discretion over its territory. Just as individual's had rights that enabled them to govern themselves, so states had the right to govern themselves within the global system. This new system made the only *reasonable* modus for international order one in which states lived beside each other but were forbidden from interfering in the internal affairs of other states.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ruggie, 142

<sup>15</sup> Inis Claude. *Swords into Plowshares*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Random House, 1971) 48

The declaration of the sovereignty of states, meaning that each government had supreme and unrestricted power to make and enforce laws in its territory, has been controversial since its adoption by the UN system and is therefore worth a more extensive discussion.<sup>16</sup> Sovereignty essentially meant that states had the power and authority to do what they wanted, unimpeded by any other political actor. In the following quote, international relations scholar, Hans Morgenthau, summarizes the total freedom and independence with which states could now operate in the world. He states that:

. . . . Each nation is free to manage its internal and external affairs according to its discretion, in so far as it is not limited by treaty . . . . The individual nation has the right to give itself any constitution it pleases, to enact whatever laws it wishes regardless of their effects upon its own citizens, and to choose any system of administration. It is free to have whatever kind of military establishment it deems necessary for the purposes of its foreign policy which, in turn, is free to determine as it sees fit.<sup>17</sup>

As this quote suggests, sovereignty can be viewed as progressive in that it preserved the world's diversity by allowing each nation to develop its own course and way of thinking without any interference from other states. So it theoretically protected smaller states from manipulation by larger states. However, it also alludes to the potential danger that could come from states acting delinquently. Chapter Three will show that total freedom to do what one pleases without restraint can be problematic when political actors become increasingly interdependent.

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<sup>16</sup> Hans Morgenthau. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966) 299

<sup>17</sup> Morgenthau, 302

Another consequence of the Treaty of Westphalia that would be polemical in centuries to come was the international competition that came from the Treaty's decentralization of power. By taking the power away from the Church and bestowing it onto the individual state governments, the Treaty created an atmosphere hostile to international cooperation. These tendencies were bolstered by the continued philosophical stress on individualism that had begun during the Enlightenment.<sup>18</sup> As applied to the state, individualism encourages competition and without a central authority dictating which wars were just and which were not, governments were free to decide and act on their own biased will. As a result, after the Treaty and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, states consolidated their power, feelings of state pride and "nationalism" developed within state borders and rivalries ensued between states.<sup>19</sup>

Colonialism in the eighteenth century (and globalization in the twentieth century) helped Europe codify its statist approach to international relations into the world's approach. As Buzan and Little noted:

It seems to be almost self-evidently true that Europeans created the first international system by bringing all parts of humankind into regular economic and strategic contact with each other. They occupied whole continents and stamped upon them a system of territorial boundaries . . . . Those places they did not reduce to colonial status (Japan, Turkey, and China) were forced to adapt to European models in order to preserve themselves.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> A. LeRoy Bennett. *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International, Inc., 1995) 13

<sup>19</sup> Ruggie, 151

<sup>20</sup> Barry Buzan and Richard Little. *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 20

Part Three of this chapter discusses how an international system influences a state's actions and interests, but in the meantime it should be extracted from Buzan's and Little's observation that the political ideals evolved in Europe were transferred into world ideals. In the same way as their political models were adopted, Western statesmen were viewed as having perfected state-craft, exemplified by Morgenthau in his statement that "American, British and Russian foreign policy appear as an intelligible, rational continuum."<sup>21</sup> Scholars such as Cox and Said, who endeavor to expose Europe's ideological domination of the world, argue that when Europe encountered other civilizations it developed a sense of superiority by comparing itself to other civilizations. This engendered in Europeans, according to Falk, "a deeply embedded sense of chosen people as privileged vehicles of progress entitled to exert dominance" and provided them a mandate to export their ideas into other societies.<sup>22</sup>

## PART TWO: REALISM

In the twentieth century, the world continued to shrink through science and technology, engendering more contact between states. To accommodate the increase in "international relations," a new field of academic inquiry emerged which sought patterns and theories in the international system. One of the oldest and most firmly established theories of how political actors pursue their interests is realism. In 1950 Hans Morgenthau formalized the theory of realism in his definitive book *The Politics of Nations*, which quickly became the handbook for most politicians in Western democracies. Realism was so popular because it did not propose anything radical, it merely crystallized the principles and

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<sup>21</sup> Morgenthau, 5

<sup>22</sup> Falk, *Explorations at the Edge of Time*, 39

standards that had governed the western international system since the Treaty of Westphalia. So impressed with his own “simplicity” with which he solved the problem of war, Morgenthau noted that “there is something spectacular in the radical simplicity of a formula that with one sweep seems to dispose of the problem of war once and for all.”<sup>23</sup> The next few pages will examine the blueprints of realism. Realism might, from a theoretical perspective, seem like a logical view of world order. It will be evident in Chapters Two and Three, however, that the UN’s structural roots in realism and its practical adherence to realist dogma do not let it “dispose of the problem of war” but to the contrary obstruct it from reducing global warfare.

What is realism? According to its founding father, Hans Morgenthau, the essence of realism can be reduced to six principles.<sup>24</sup> The first declares that politics, like society in general, is dictated by objective rational laws that can be found in human nature. Based on the old idea that everything should operate according to logic and reason, realism postulates that states should also govern their interactions according to logic and reason. The second tenet of realism is reminiscent of the Westphalian decree that made states the only legitimate actor in politics. It asserts that the state is the supreme actor in international relations and hence omits all other actors from consideration. The qualities of a state, according to realists, are defined as having a geographical base that is differentiated from other territories, common and interdependent economic patterns within the territory, a shared language, and a national character based on a common

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<sup>23</sup> Morgenthau, 548

<sup>24</sup> A full description of these principles can be found in Morgenthau, 5-10

past.<sup>25</sup> Internally, the state also ensures the cohesion of economically unequal societies where the elite maintain dominance over the lower classes.<sup>26</sup> The third tenet of realism maintains that the essence of politics is the struggle for power. Morgenthau stipulated power as the central and universal goal of foreign policy:

The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power . . . . We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power.<sup>27</sup>

States use reason to calculate their decisions, the goal being to maximize their power and when a politician approaches a decision, he has as his foremost objective to do what is in his best interest, which is always power. The highest measurement of power is military capability.<sup>28</sup> These principles combined can be summarized as follows: according to realism, state interest is defined as state power, state power equates with state security and state security means preserving the integrity of one's territory and its institutions.

The last three tenets of realism are concerned with keeping the political sphere autonomous from other sociological (i.e. moral or economic) spheres. Realism acknowledges moral consequences in politics but does not let them factor into an actor's rational equation. Realism dismisses morality as an impediment to a rational decision, which should be calculated as objectively as possible with power and wealth. If a state

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<sup>25</sup> John G. Stoessinger. *The Might of Nations: World Politics in Our Times*. (New York, London, Tokyo, Toronto: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993) 10-12. A shared language can be an integrative factor but is not a prerequisite for a state.

<sup>26</sup> James Anderson, ed. *The Rise of the Modern State*. (Brighton, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1986) 212

<sup>27</sup> Morgenthau, 27

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

acts altruistically, realists would likely consider it naïve and possibly even self-destructive.<sup>29</sup>

The state sovereignty established at Westphalia assumed that states would not interfere in the internal affairs of other states. Similarly, realism's assumption that every state has the goal of maximizing its power implies that states are inherently competitive. One can extrapolate that a collection of competitive states creates an interstate system hostile to cooperation.<sup>30</sup> Any collaborative endeavors between states would be based on their perceived self-interest. Hedley Bull and John Vincent who represent the British views on realism contend that "the element of war and struggle for power among states has always been present, and remains present, in the modern international system . . . ." and thus it is imperative that states put systems in place to prevent war.<sup>31</sup> The realist relies on a balance of power among states as the principal mode of self-defense because as long as one state does not become more powerful than any other, their independence and existence is preserved.

Realism captures the essence of Western liberal thinking. And since its inception in 1950, it has remained firmly entrenched not only in the United Nations, but also in academic circles and government offices around the world, especially in the West but also in countries that by various means adopted Western political practices. Because it is so firmly established it is difficult to realize how much it influences society's

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<sup>29</sup> Falk, *Explorations at the Edge of Time*, 37

<sup>30</sup> Morgenthau, 205

<sup>31</sup> Hedley Bull. "Does Order Exist in International Politics?" *The Anarchial Society*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); as cited in Morgenthau, 548

consciousness and current international relations. The next section uses Constructivist theory to convey how realism's proponents have been able to thoroughly dominate the international system and institutions within it.

### PART THREE: NEO-CONSTRUCTIVISM

*[It] is astounding when one considers that the nations that possess this inescapable power of life and death are in many ways only abstractions, figments of the human imagination. For though the power that is brought to bear to implement a [state]'s will is ultimately physical, the will itself is chiefly the result of human images, images of what a nation is and about why and how its will should be expressed and obeyed.<sup>32</sup>*

To understand this point better one can ask the question: What is a state – is it the people? The government? The shared beliefs? The territory? All of these or none? Stoessinger and I would agree that the state and the power it wields are not tangible but conceptual constructs of our current thinking. Realism is the theoretical embodiment of Westphalian or “modern” thought as applied to politics. And because of its European and American ancestry, it continues to define the international system since the Treaty of Westphalia. As this paper argues that realism's presence in the United Nations is anachronistic, it is helpful to employ constructivist notions about system formation to chip away at realism's ostensible preeminence and permanence in the current world order.

Constructivism, pioneered by Alexander Wendt in his book *Social Theory of International Politics*, but also present in the works of Ruggie, Falk, and Cox, is concerned with international structure and system formation, that is, if and what forces shape and are affected by international structures. A structure can be ideational, material,

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<sup>32</sup> Stoessinger, 6

or both.<sup>33</sup> Constructivists believe in a self-fulfilling prophecy in which “shared beliefs” or ideas between actors create a certain ideological structure, that structure constrains the ideas within it, which in turn reinforces the structure.<sup>34</sup> Another way of thinking about this concept is thinking about the chicken and the egg in a slightly different way. If a chicken produces an egg, out of which is hatched a chick, the chick will mimic the behavior of its parent. The chick’s behavior and perception of the world is limited to what its parent does. It will know nothing else unless it comes in contact with another chicken who might have different behavior. So, as Falk observes, if “the main agents of political activity are realists, than a realist landscape results.”<sup>35</sup> Constructivism helps us see that Anglo-American ideas created a state-based realist international structure that dictates to actors in that structure, whether they be states or politicians, what their possible behaviors should be.

In contrast to realism’s insistence that the political sphere must be kept pure from morals and other cultural and social phenomenon, constructivists assert that shared ideas between political actors are important shapers of the international structure. Constructivism does not deny the meaningful role material forces like geography and armed strength play, but, according to Wendt, it holds that “international structure consists fundamentally in shared knowledge . . . that effects not only state behavior, but

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<sup>33</sup> An example of an ideational structure are the unspoken “rules” governing a particular community like, for example, the Christian Church which decrees that one shalt not kill another human being, commit adultery, have an abortion, etc. A material structure would be a governing body, at a national or international level.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander Wendt. *Social Theory of International Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999) 186

<sup>35</sup> Richard Falk. *On Humane Governance; Toward a New Global Politics*. The World Order Models Project Report of the Global Civilization Initiative. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) 43

state identities and interests as well.”<sup>36</sup> We can consider this a “top-down” approach to system-analysis but constructivists also look at things from the “bottom-up” and argue that behaviors, identities and interests legitimize and reinforce the structure. Wendt uses the relationship between the United States (US) and the Soviet Union during the Cold War to illustrate this point. Once the political condition known as the Cold War was taking place, the US and the Soviet Union believed that they were enemies which helped them form their identities and interests in certain situations. Since their actions were based on their belief that they were enemies, the Cold War was continually reinforced. Key to Wendt’s argument is that actors have “shared beliefs about how they should behave, which motivate them to act in ways that reproduce those understandings and reinforce particular ways of thinking.”<sup>37</sup> In other words, the structure constrains the possible actions of the actors within it. Some realists might say that state interests are not constructed or affected by the international system.<sup>38</sup> I disagree. Examples of state interests being influenced by the international system, are those non-Western states such as Japan and Turkey which adopted European economic and political models in order to operate in the global economy because that structure requires its participants to adhere to certain policies and practices. The UN is also the expression of the particular political, economic, social, ideological, and cultural structures that were defined by the realist international system. As the UN is the post World War II embodiment of realist structures of world order its operation is constrained by them.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Wendt, 31

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 186-188

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 30

<sup>39</sup> Keith Krause and W. Andy Knight, eds. *State Society and the UN System: Changing Perspectives on Multilateralism*. (Paris, New York, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1995) 8

Assuming constructivism is a sound theory and the international system and its components are constantly reinforcing each other resulting in the reproduction of the system and its ideas, the world has lost a lot of its diversity and creative potential for forming new systems. Realism has become a comfortable lens through which to view world politics making it that much more essential to see past the current frame of reference and take a more critical approach to the global order. The next chapter explores how the UN is an institutional manifestation of realist principles.

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## CHAPTER TWO

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### LOCATING REALISM IN THE UN'S FRAMEWORK

This chapter parallels the principles of the UN system and realism. Underlying the UN Charter are basic ideas that provided the philosophical underpinning and moral justification for its structure. Most of these principles are also found, explicitly or implicitly in realism.<sup>40</sup> These tenets, that states are the only legitimate political actors, that the government of each state has supreme authority in its territory, and that national and international security is in every state's best interest, are shared by UN planners and realist adherents alike. Together they constitute the basic rules of international conduct that all member states are ostensibly committed to respect.<sup>41</sup> Since principles are not very useful without implementation, an analysis of the international behavior of states in Chapter Three will analyze the implications of realist principles for contemporary world politics.

World War II (WWII) was a wake up call to the most powerful countries of the world. It was a "worst-case-scenario" that came true. The hatred activated by the Nazis and the

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<sup>40</sup> Jack C. Plano and Robert E. Riggs. *Foreign World Order: Politics of International Organizations*. (New York: Macmillian Press, 1967) 18

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

ease with which they disregarded international protocol signaled to the Allied forces that they must work together to prevent such devastation from happening again. But even before the war was over the Great Powers in the Allied forces (Britain, the US, and the Soviets) began to think seriously about and make proposals for a world agency stronger than the League of Nations that would avert another global collision. Their thinking, proposals, debates, and agreements resulted in the creation of the United Nations.

In many respects, the UN became an extension of realist ideas because the WWII was a contest for world order and since the Allies won, they were entitled to shape it. A large amount of postwar planning took place in the US because much of Europe was overrun with Axis military forces.<sup>42</sup> Because of the large role the US government and its ideology played in the formation of the UN, the US is widely considered to have been the midwife to the UN. The willingness of American leaders to help create and play a leading role in a general international organization represented a significant departure from their refusal to join the League of Nations. American predominance was largely related to the fact that the US government had the resources to undertake the elaborate preparations.<sup>43</sup> But US, and even British and Soviet, leadership was by no means altruistic. While it was never explicitly stated, the Allies' guidance also meant that their interests would have to be protected.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Hilderbrand, x

<sup>43</sup> Claude, *Swords into Plowshares*, 55

<sup>44</sup> Bennett, 45

The UN's framers incorporated the core structure and principles that had guided international development, and an examination of its theoretical scheme reveals that it was a clear progression of Anglo-American political thought. Its creation represented an agreement with Locke's postulation that a peaceful world could be achieved by a social contract between civil society and a minimal government and an accord with the realist principles of state sovereignty and power politics. This chapter locates the presence of these ideas in the UN Charter, the basic document that has been accepted as the blueprint for the UN system.

The UN in its entirety comprises 6 main organs, 34 programs, and 18 specialized agencies, and it would be far beyond the scope of this study to expose all the evidence of its realist nature. This chapter focuses on four realist assumptions manifest in the UN Charter and framework as the Charter provides the organization's structure, principles, powers, and functions and outlines all of its subsequent activities and programs.<sup>45</sup> The first of these assumptions, that states are the only political actors in the international system and their governments are the only legitimate representatives of those actors, is exemplified by its membership criteria of statehood. The second is that security (being the impetus for the organization itself) is the first priority of every member state. The unity among states in the UN demonstrates an agreement with the realist tenet that an alliance among states is essential for the preservation of every member state's security. The third assumption is that power is static. The Great Powers gave themselves a superior role in governing the UN under the assumption that they would be able to cooperate after

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<sup>45</sup> Inis Claude. *Swords into Plowshares*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Random House, 1971) 148. A. LeRoy Bennett. *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International, Inc., 1995) 56

the war. The fourth realist doctrine in the UN is its recognition that all states are sovereign and that the UN cannot interfere in the internal affairs of a state.

ASSUMPTION ONE: STATES ARE THE MAJOR ACTORS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

As discussed in Chapter One, realism recognizes the state as the major actors in international politics. A cursory glance at the UN's membership roster reveals that like the international system, the UN is a reflection of the modern state system because it is composed exclusively of states. But unlike the League of Nations Charter that explicitly declared that states were the only members, the UN Charter assumes this already and does not state it categorically. The closest it comes is in Article 4 where it declares that "[m]embership to the United Nations is open to all peace-loving states which accept the obligations contained in the present Charter . . . ."<sup>46</sup> The Charter considers, as does realism, the government of each state to be its legitimate representative in the international sphere and is assumed to have complete control over all non-state actors within its territory.

ASSUMPTION TWO: STATE SECURITY IS THE HIGHEST PRIORITY

Realist theory holds that state security is indispensable in the modern world and it is no coincidence that security was the *raison d'être* of the UN.<sup>47</sup> This is evident in Article 1 of the Charter which submits that one of the primary purposes of the organization is:

To maintain peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of peace, and to

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<sup>46</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Articles 3 and 4

<sup>47</sup> Robert C. Hilderbrand. *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security*. (Chapel Hill, London: North Carolina Press, 1990) 120

bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice . . . adjustment of settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to the breach of peace.<sup>48</sup>

The ambiguity with which the Article deals with what should be considered a “threat to international peace” has been controversial since the Charter was written but what is important to extract from Article 1 is its emphasis on the UN’s effort to avoid war. The entire organization’s endeavor to make political, economic, and cultural interactions between states more fluid in order to reduce friction between states is also a measurement of the UN’s commitment to security. Under the assumption that the UN adopted realism’s emphasis on state security as the foremost expression of state interest, the question became how best to do this. The options were total global disarmament, security through self-defense, or UN collective action against a perceived aggressor. As the first option would have been much too risky for any state to adhere to because it relied on trust, the UN planners favored a combination of the last two which entailed a preservation of a state’s “right of individual or collective self-defense” against armed attack.<sup>49</sup>

The necessity for security is premised on the realist belief that without a balance of power, war will occur because state governments control nearly all of the military power in the world and states are perpetually in competition to maximize their power relative to each other. According to realist pioneer Morgenthau:

Alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating within a multiple-state system . . . . The aspiration for power on the part of several nations, each trying to maintain or overthrow the status quo, leads

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<sup>48</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 1

<sup>49</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 51

of necessity to a configuration that is called the balance of power and to policies that aim at preserving it.<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, cooperative initiative between governments safeguarding security is in every state's self interest.

The most prominent organ of the UN dedicated to security matters is the Security Council, which consists of five permanent members and four non-permanent members.

According to Falk, the architects of the council believed that:

. . . . Five actors provide the optimal conditions for managing the state system through reliance on balance of power mechanisms. As much of our thinking about international relations is based upon a military security paradigm, a few strong governments are the principal actors and a managerial objective is to secure balance and moderation in their relations with one another.<sup>51</sup>

It was agreed that efficiency necessitated a minimalist decision-making body and security would be best preserved if this body was constituted by the stronger states. By design, enforcement actions launched by the Council were to be supported by all members of the UN. While security issues would ideally pass through the Security Council before the UN acts, states were not required to wait for a Council decision before taking matters into their own hands.<sup>52</sup>

At the Dumbarton Oaks conference, some English and American planners had envisioned a world body that would mitigate the influence of the realist emphasis on military strength and security in international relations. The war had indicated to them that purely

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<sup>50</sup> Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. 1966) 161, 175

<sup>51</sup> Claude, *Swords into Plowshares*, 65

<sup>52</sup> Bennett, 61

self-serving goals were destructive. But as the war came to an end, these idealistic hopes were again replaced with realist objectives. According to Dumbarton Oaks historian Robert Hilderbrand, by August 1944:

. . . the winding down of the war was causing the Great Powers to become increasingly aware of their postwar objectives, so that traditional nationalism was replacing the prevention of the next war as the dominant force in postwar policy-making. What this meant was that the Big Three [the US, UK, and Soviets] saw the defense of their own security, the protection of their own interests, and the enjoyment of the fruits of their victory in the world war as most important.<sup>53</sup>

The Great Powers did not realize that what was in their collective interests during the war might not be the same afterwards. Inherent in the responsibilities conferred on the Security Council were several assumptions about the Security Council's ability to operate effectively in the postwar climate. According to Morgenthau the constitutional scheme of the UN was built upon the following three presumptions:

That the Great Powers, acting in unison, would deal with any threat to peace and security, regardless of its source. Second, their combined wisdom and strength would be sufficient to meet all such threats without resort to war. Third, no such threat would emanate from one of the Great Powers themselves.<sup>54</sup>

In giving the five permanent members of the Security Council a veto, Article 27 of the Charter effectively required unanimity of the big powers on any matter involving a breach or threat to peace and security. The UN would only be able to carry out its missions if the alliance between the Great Powers remained after the war. On the basis that by formally giving the Great Powers the decision-making authority that they had already assumed, it was hoped that the power of the Security Council and the veto would

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<sup>53</sup> Hilderbrand, 246

<sup>54</sup> Morgenthau, 465

overcome a perceived weakness of the League of Nations.<sup>55</sup> In the League, the Council could not enforce but only recommend armed action. Since the Security Council of the UN would make most of the important decisions, it was hoped that the Council would operate more efficiently than the League where interference from the assembly delayed its activities. The planners of the UN saw the more powerful Security Council as the necessary teeth in the peacekeeping activities of the UN.

#### ASSUMPTION THREE: POWER IS STATIC

At first glance the Charter ostensibly perpetuates the Westphalian principle of the equality of states. The planners created a General Assembly, patterned after the League's, to give vent to the opinions of the less powerful countries and make the organization more truly a world body.<sup>56</sup> As the one-state-one-vote is basic to the idea of sovereign equality among members, UN planners accorded equal voting rights to all its members.<sup>57</sup> But the power granted to the Security Council, with the provision that each of its five permanent members would have a veto, signified the UN planners' wish to fill the gap between the Westphalian idea of sovereign equality and the realist belief that the hierarchy within the international system should be preserved in any international organization.

In *Politics Among Nations*, Morgenthau contends that "in order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives."<sup>58</sup> This idea, embodied in

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<sup>55</sup> Hilderbrand, 110. Claude, *Swords into Plowshares*, 69

<sup>56</sup> Bennett, 59. Hilderbrand, 108

<sup>57</sup> Hilderbrand, 113

<sup>58</sup> Morgenthau, 4

the Charter, and carried over into the construction of the Security Council, is that the UN could be more effective if it took formal and explicit account of the international power structure as it was understood to exist in 1945. Stoessinger put it well:

The Security Council veto might be viewed simply as the formal parliamentary expression of the real veto which any superpower actually has as a fact of life in a system of sovereign nation-states. . . . Veto power has forced the Security Council to de-emphasize majority rule as far as the superpowers are concerned in favor of the more realistic unanimity principle: slow and frequently laborious negotiations to accommodate divergent points of view until the superpowers prefer to acquiesce rather than upset the system. The veto is a lesson in realpolitik.<sup>59</sup>

Without cooperation among the most powerful states solutions would be virtually impossible, so the makers of the UN gave positions of authority on the Security Council to the Great Powers which were commensurate with their real-life responsibilities for maintaining world security.<sup>60</sup> All together, Articles 23, 27, 47, 86, 106, 108 set forth the special responsibilities and privileges of the Great Powers.

The power conferred on the Security Council is also evident when looking at the distinctly subordinate role that the less powerful states play in the UN. In the field of peacekeeping, which everyone recognizes as the most important task of the UN, the function of the General Assembly is secondary to that of the Security Council. The Assembly has the right to consider questions relating to the maintenance of peace and security, but not to take up any such matter on its own initiative when it is already being dealt with by the Council. The General Assembly can make recommendations about questions of peace and security, except when the matter is in the hands of the Council.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> John Stoessinger, *The United Nations and the Superpowers*. (New York: Random House, 1977) 20

<sup>60</sup> Bennett, 67

<sup>61</sup> Hilderbrand, 109

Gromyko, the Soviet Representative at Dumbarton Oaks, noted the distinction between the powers of the Council and the Assembly: “the assembly would *discuss* and the Council would *decide and act* on all questions of security.”<sup>62</sup> At the time of Charter ratification, some smaller nations attempted unsuccessfully to make the role of the Assembly more prominent but the Great Powers would not agree. Cordell Hull, U.S. Secretary of State 1944 made the US position clear when he stated that “the United States Government would not remain one day in the United Nations without retaining the veto power.”<sup>63</sup> In the end, the power of the Council and the veto withstood all critique and remains to this day a bulwark of great-power privilege.

#### ASSUMPTION FOUR: THE SOVEREIGNTY OF STATES

The Great Powers created the UN with the belief that national security and international peace were symbiotic aims. But the provisions to protect the sovereignty of member states eventually handicapped the security measures that had been established. As Lord Cranborne, Churchill’s secretary of state for the dominions, claimed in a House of Lords debate, if the new United Nations would have a “really serviceable set of teeth,” they would not be so sharp because of the sovereignty clause.<sup>64</sup>

One of the most fundamental principles established in the Treaty of Westphalia and incorporated into realist ideology was the sovereign equality of states. As WWII continued, the Great Powers debated the issue of to what extent a state’s sovereignty

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 220

<sup>64</sup> “The Dumbarton Oaks Tentative Proposals” (British), 18 October 1944, Sweester Papers; as cited in Hilderbrand, 245

should be preserved in the UN. Senator Vandenberg, during the Senate debate over sovereignty in the Charter commented that:

These things we toiled at San Francisco to preserve. We can effectively cooperate for peace without the loss of these things. To cooperate is not to lose our sovereignty. It is to use our sovereignty in quest of the dearest boon which the prayers of humankind pursue.<sup>65</sup>

The Great Powers were willing to contribute their military forces to police the postwar world but they wanted to maintain control of them both before and after their use.<sup>66</sup> Since they were unwilling to part with supreme authority in their internal affairs, the principle of sovereignty was made explicit in the UN Charter. Article 1 declares that “[n]othing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters that are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state . . .”<sup>67</sup> In effect, the Charter principle suggests that only international problems and issues are the proper objects for UN inquiries and actions and that national questions remain the internal affairs of member states (unless the state consents to UN involvement).<sup>68</sup> Former Secretary General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld elaborated on the implications of Article 2.

. . . in light of the domestic jurisdiction limitation of the Charter, it must be assumed that the [Security] Council would not authorize the . . . interven[tion] with armed troops in an internal conflict . . .<sup>69</sup>

The Charter’s commitment to the realist principle of sovereignty removed any way for the UN to act independently because it meant that the members reserved the power of

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<sup>65</sup> Congressional Record, Vol. 91, Part 6, p.7957 (July 23, 1945); as cited in Hilderbrand, 140

<sup>66</sup> NBC Broadcast, “Building the Peace,” 3 March 1945, Sweester Papers; as cited in Hilderbrand, 141

<sup>67</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 2

<sup>68</sup> Plano and Riggs, 19

<sup>69</sup> Dag Hammarskjöld August 21, 1960 in Brian Urquhart. *Hammarskjöld*. (London, Sydney, Toronto: The Bodley Head Ltd., 1972) 256

ultimate decision making for themselves. For effective action, the UN would be dependent on the willingness of its members to cooperate.

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### CHAPTER THREE

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#### THE PROBLEMS PRODUCED BY REALISM IN THE UN

As the last two chapters of this paper have discussed, the UN was constructed within a particular political and ideological paradigm. Hence, everything from its ideological and organizational structure to its many mechanisms and systems naturally followed from that (predominantly realist) paradigm. But the world's political landscape has changed dramatically since the formulation of the Charter and the organization that followed its design.

In 1945, the American journalist Theodore H. White expounded that “the world is fluid and about to be remade,” probably unaware of how right he would be.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, since the end of World War II and the inauguration of the United Nations, some parts of the world began to develop at a much faster pace than others. This transformation was brought about for the most part by the extraordinary expansion of interactions across boundaries and territories, a process that has since been entitled “globalization.” The intricacies of this process are beyond the scope of this analysis, yet a basic understanding of it and its

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<sup>70</sup> John G. Ruggie “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations. *International Organization*. Vol. 47, No. 1. (Winter 1993) 139

effects on the world's political organization are crucial to my argument and are best summed up by Inis Claude's statement that:

Modern methods of transport and communication, the spread of education, the prevalence of tourism, the intensification of economic and cultural exchange – all these and other factors are inexplorably breaking down the walls that have divided mankind into discrete units, promoting the mingling of peoples, fostering the awareness of interdependence, and encouraging the enlargement of social, political, and moral horizons.<sup>71</sup>

The increased interdependence among the world's citizens has had profound implications for the global community by challenging conventional notions of political and territorial space. Along with substantial increases in the flow of trade, investment, tourism, and knowledge, there has been a corresponding intensification of what are perceived of as global problems, such as rapid population growth and migration, shortages of water, food and energy supplies, and mass poverty.<sup>72</sup> The vulnerability of every state to nuclear attack, however strong its military capability, is also an indicator of the inability of governments to ensure their citizens' security. The same is true for the potential for environmental catastrophes. The citizens of every state are vulnerable to the repercussions of a handful of negligent governments' mismanagement of basic ecological issues involving pollution, climate change, and the maintenance of ocean quality.<sup>73</sup>

This chapter posits that the institutional basis of the international system, which is essentially concentrated on the state level, is ill-equipped to provide for the fundamental well-being of the world population. And the United Nations, as a miniature representation

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<sup>71</sup> Inis Claude. *States and the Global System: Politics, Law and Organization*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988) 182

<sup>72</sup> Falk, *A Study of Future Worlds*, 58; A. LeRoy Bennett. *International Organizations: Principles and Issues*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall International, Inc., 1995) 22

<sup>73</sup> Falk, *A Study of Future Worlds*, 9

of that state-centric system, is also proving ill-equipped to deal effectively with global problems. As a result, these developments have accelerated a trend in the formation of international private and public organizations to pick up the slack left by governments in managing, regulating, and sometimes even preventing exchange across borders.<sup>74</sup>

This chapter identifies three instances where realist notions embedded in the UN have handicapped the organization from accomplishing its mission to facilitate world peace and security, not because realism is intrinsically defective but because it is inappropriate in today's political setting. I look firstly at the emergence of new and influential players in the global political arena and how they are challenging the primacy of the state, the only actor qualified for membership in the UN. Second, I examine the incompatibility between the UN's adherence to preserving the sovereignty of states in an increasingly interdependent world community, especially with regard to its commitment to protecting human rights. Third, I discuss how the unequal distribution of power in the UN's structure, evidenced by the imbalance between the Security Council and the General Assembly, undermines the UN's effort towards an international system policed by a collective security process. In combination, these inconsistencies lodged in the UN's framework debilitate it in the contemporary world.

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<sup>74</sup> Bennett, 22; David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt and Jonathan Perraton. *Global Transformations: Politics, Economics and Culture*. (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999) 53

PART ONE: THE EMERGENCE OF NON-STATE ACTORS IN GLOBAL POLITICS AND THE  
IMPACT OF THIS ON THE UN

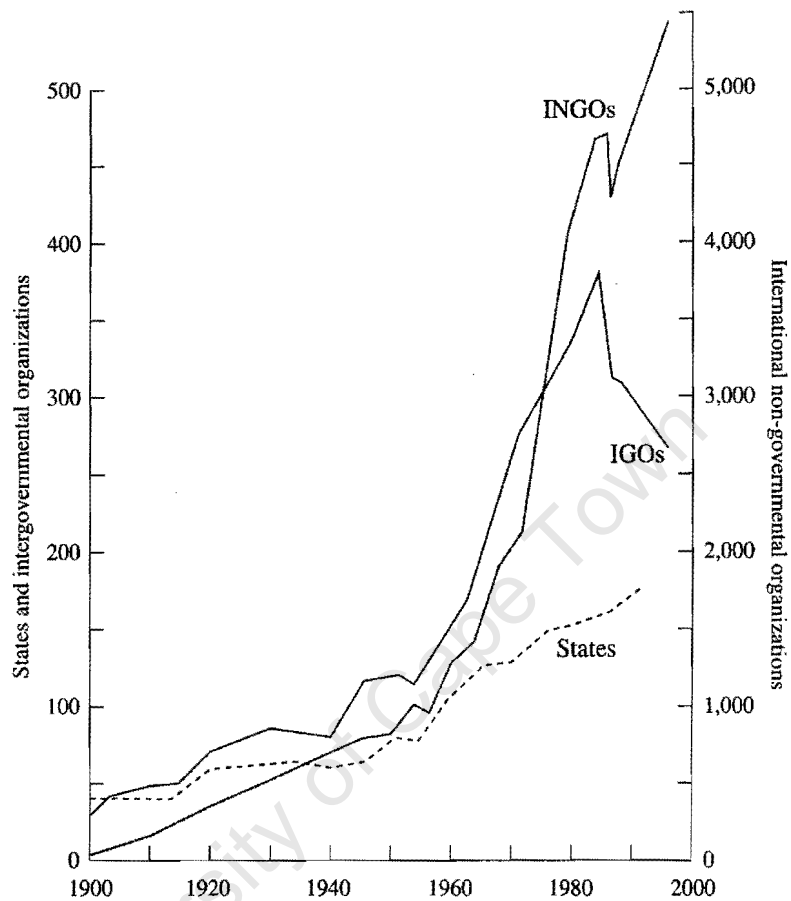
As discussed in Chapter Two, the idea that the world was divided into ostensibly capable states, with a unified population engaged in a single-minded pursuit of clearly established goals and with distinctive sets of geopolitical interests was built into the Charter of the UN system.<sup>75</sup> But that familiar image is no longer an adequate portrayal of the world's political landscape.

Today's state is confronted by an enormous number of international organizations and agencies that wield a tremendous amount of influence in the global political arena. Non-state actors such as multinational corporations, transnational pressure groups, and social movements participate intensively in politics. So do many subnational actors and national pressure groups whose activities spill over into the international arena. While state governments remain powerful actors, since 1945 their monopoly of power in the global space has been eroded by new forms of multilateral and multinational politics involving agencies besides governments, namely international governmental organizations (IGOs) as well as a wide variety of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) which coordinate communities of interest across territorial boundaries. A quantitative look at the recent growth in non-state political actors reveals that from 1909 to 1996, the number of IGOs increased by more than 600% from 37 to 260. The growth of INGOs has been equally profound, increasing from 832 to 5472 in 1996.<sup>76</sup> The following graph provides a visual sense of the explosion of new, non-state actors in the global political sphere.

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<sup>75</sup> Held, *Global Transformations*, 63

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 53



Graph 1. The growth of states, IGOs and INGOs in the twentieth century<sup>77</sup>

The form, content and missions of these non-state actors are remarkably diverse. The world of INGOS ranges from political pressure groups such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, to religious entities like the World Muslim Congress and the Catholic Church, to human welfare groups such as the International Red Cross and OXFAM, and even to criminal associations like Al Queda and the Mafia.<sup>78</sup> A less tangible recent

<sup>77</sup> *Yearbook of International Associations*. Union of International Associations, 1996; as cited in Held, *Global Transformations*, 54

<sup>78</sup> Held, *Global Transformations*, 58

addition to global politics has been the increased importance of international law. International law ranges from international treaties or conventions which are recognized by state governments to international codes of conducts which imply the acceptance of a rule a particular group of states.<sup>79</sup> One of the more prominent examples of International Law is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948.

The profusion of new actors in world politics can also be attributed to the inability of governments to cope with the issues presented by the increase in interdependence because most states were not built to manage anational and aterritorial interests. Thus, the introduction of new political players was accompanied by the fracturing of the decision-making structure of world governance, resulting in a kind of “governance without government” as James Rosenau has dubbed it.<sup>80</sup> Between the Treaty of Westphalia and World War II, states had been the sole authorities and decision-makers in global politics. But the emergence of new political mechanisms -- from multinational corporations, transnational social movements to the plethora of NGOs that pursue goals and objectives that have a bearing on international rule -- has redefined world order from a state-system to a mixed-actor system. This challenges the Westphalian, state-based and realist model of the global political order that is presupposed by the UN. This is not to say that states are no longer key players. Indeed, the argument that emerging actors and increased interdependence somehow implies the growing irrelevance of states is, as Janice Thompson and Stephen Krasner suggest, “. . . fundamentally misplaced. States are

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 63

<sup>80</sup> James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel. *Governance without government: order and change in world politics*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

anything but irrelevant even in the ever more integrated society. Nevertheless the standard realist ground for rejecting the transformational potential of these developments is equally misplaced.”<sup>81</sup> Indeed, if social movements, NGOs, regional political associations and so on are excluded from global governance, it will be very difficult to address the crises that are threatening global stability. Held, McGrew, Goldblatt and Perraton agree that “global politics presupposes a broad notion of global governance as a necessary element in the changing constellation of political life.”<sup>82</sup> Therefore, the UN, which has existed to date as a community of states and some might even argue -- a state-building agency, must readily embrace the other power-wielding actors in global politics.

#### PART TWO: THE PROBLEM OF SOVEREIGNTY

A major component of the UN’s ideological and structural frameworks, stipulated in Articles 2 and 3 of the Charter, is the Westphalian notion of sovereign states, which ordains each state an independent unit that can neither interfere, nor be interfered with by any other state or non-state body. The Charter instructs that:

Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter . . .<sup>83</sup>

Chapter Two considered some of the merits of sovereignty, namely that it endows each state the authority to decide what is best for its citizens without interference from other states that might have a different opinion concerning the best course of action. This is not an insignificant benefit but historically, the principle of sovereignty has been so abused

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<sup>81</sup> Ruggie, 142

<sup>82</sup> Held, *Global Transformations*, 50

<sup>83</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 2 (7)

that from the perspective of those within many states, sovereignty offers few benefits. In view of the prior discussion of the emergence of new influential actors in the global political arena, along with several forthcoming arguments over the next few pages, it is reasonable to assert that the principle of complete sovereignty is not entirely appropriate in contemporary society. Bennett echoes this sentiment when he states that:

One of the most basic of these paradoxes is the insistence upon state sovereignty, supremacy and independence in a shrinking, interdependent world. Each state declares its right to determine its own course of action regardless of the effects upon other states and, at the same time, is increasingly dependent upon other states in vital areas of mutual concern such as trade, communications, economic development, and world peace. Rigid adherence to the absolutist right of each state to be bound in international affairs only by its own positive assent to the specific course to be followed places formidable obstacles in the path of resolving conflicts of international interests.<sup>84</sup>

Key in Bennett's statement is his emphasis on how sovereignty makes it difficult for the UN to perform its most basic function of resolving international conflicts because it is subservient to the will of its member states and those states are bound to act only by consent not by force. This is not to discount sovereignty all together for it is a valuable ideal when kept in check. Nevertheless, the interdependent aspects of states make conventional statist methods of policy-making dangerously anachronistic. As mentioned in the previous section, the increased interdependence and simultaneous deterritorialization has revealed problems of global proportions that require global solutions. And as states are proving incapable of effectively dealing with problems that are global in nature and consequences, the adequacy of the sovereign state as a central organizing basis without any governing body above it in the world system, seems increasingly questionable. This section elucidates the pitfalls of sovereignty by

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<sup>84</sup> Bennett, 5

examining how it has impeded the protection of human rights and removed any obligation from rich countries to aid poor countries.

Preceding Article 2 of the Charter which commits the UN to upholding the sovereignty of its members, Article 1 pledges it to “promoting and encouraging respect for human rights.”<sup>85</sup> The last fifty years have shown that these two values can be mutually exclusive, and it has often come down to the decision of which should take primacy, a state’s sovereignty or the respect for human rights and generally the former prevails. Upholding human rights had been one of the UN founders’ foremost attempts to transcend the realist tradition of power politics where only material interests are valued but with few exceptions (that have occurred only recently as the political climate is changing in favor of human rights) sovereignty has taken precedence. As mentioned earlier, the effect of sovereignty is to permit governments to treat their citizens as they wish and also to grant governments the right to withstand intervention in their domestic affairs by external agencies.<sup>86</sup> An international organization with real enforcement powers is incompatible with the principle of absolute national sovereignty. Thus even the formal organs of human rights protection like the United Nations High Commission on Refugees do not have any coercive power. The UN’s willingness to intervene is still dependent on the will of the most powerful states and it is only when their interests are at stake that intervention is sanctioned.

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<sup>85</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 1

<sup>86</sup> Held, *Global Transformations*, 65

The case of the Rwandan genocide is one of the starkest examples of the human cost of sovereignty. In December of 1946, the General Assembly of the UN declared genocide a crime under international law. The General Assembly went further adopting Resolution 260A(III), the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which obliged "Contracting Parties" to "undertake to prevent and to punish . . . acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group."<sup>87</sup> The UN had a military presence in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide, in which the Hutu Power leadership killed one million Tutsis over the course of a three-week period. On several occasions, the Commander of the UN force sent urgent messages to the Security Council warning them of the imminent massacre and informing them of the extermination as it began. Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, sent back the message that intervention was "beyond the mandate entrusted to the UN." And so UN soldiers stood helplessly back and watched the massacre, never firing a shot.

The utopian premise of the Genocide Convention had been that a moral imperative to prevent efforts to exterminate entire populations should be the overriding interest animating the action of the international community of sovereign states, the thought being that the protection of humanity was in every state's interest. It was well understood in the aftermath of WWII that a state's action against genocide would require willingness to use force and to risk the lives of its own. But as so much of the internationalist experiment has proven to be, this notion is fundamentally at odds with the principle of sovereignty. States have never acted for purely disinterested reasons. The Chinese

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<sup>87</sup> The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Resolution 260A(III), adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, December 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

States have never acted for purely disinterested reasons. The Chinese invasion of Tibet, the brutal discrimination of blacks under the Apartheid government in South Africa, and the recent abuse of power by Zimbabwean President, Robert Mugabe are other examples of situations where states have violated the human rights of its citizens and the UN did not intervene.

Sovereignty has the additional disadvantage of removing any formal obligation states might have to help each other and works against UN initiatives to make foreign aid obligatory. The political organization of the world into sovereign states is increasingly harmful in today's interdependent society because, as Falk explains, it "relieves the rich of any special duty toward the poor except to continue their own pursuit of wealth by way of economic growth carried on as efficiently, hence as profitably, as possible."<sup>89</sup> While international cooperation engenders the expectation that stronger, more developed states have a duty to contribute resources to lesser-developed states, it is not legally binding. This discretionary basis of interstate relations means that rich countries acknowledge no duty to share their resources with poor countries or to make it a high priority to include the improvement of economic conditions in those countries.<sup>90</sup> Falk continues that:

The obstacle here is much less conceptual than it is geopolitical: the realist mind-set of political leaders and their advisors is conditioned by a materialistic view of interests that regards human rights factors as peripheral even if presented in genocidal form. Thus if material interests are not seriously engaged, there is little prospect of a response that goes beyond the confines of a gesture, cheap responses with limited risks.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Falk, *A Study of Future Worlds*, 38

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 67

<sup>91</sup> Richard Falk. *On Humane Governance; Toward a New Global Politics*. The World Order Models Project Report of the Global Civilization Initiative. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995) 37

Falk's statement highlights the contradiction between the realist ideology that permeates the UN and its other social and developmental objectives. It should be recalled from Chapter One's description of realist values that skillful realist politicians do not factor in social or any other moral considerations when they make decisions. All that matters is interest, defined as power and measured by either military strength or material wealth. It is only when social and moral interests are in line with material interests that the former will take precedence over the latter which is why action was taken to halt the genocide in Bosnia where Americans and Europeans had strategic concerns and not in Rwanda.

Making it difficult for the UN to assert power are those who feel strongly that the UN and other international organizations are already overstepping their boundaries when they attempt to intervene in matters that have historically been the jurisdiction of governments alone. Jesse Helms, Chairman of the US Committee on Foreign Relations, articulates the American position that the UN should be subordinate to states.

Worse, with the steady growth in the size and scope of its activities, the United Nations is being transformed from an institution of sovereign states to a quasi-sovereign entity in itself. UN Reform . . . is about restoring the legitimacy of the nation-state. It is not the job of the United Nations to meet the needs of 5.5 billion people – that is the job of states.<sup>92</sup>

Indeed, entrenched interests backed by powerful instruments of influence and enforcement will resist changes in the international system that are perceived as a potential threat to those interests.<sup>93</sup> But this should not deter those working in global politics from empowering and democratizing the UN.

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<sup>92</sup> (R. N.C) Chairman of US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, in *Saving the UN: A Challenge to the Next Secretary-General*. (New York: Global Policy Forum, 1996) 1-3

<sup>93</sup> Bennett, 14

PART THREE: THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION OF POWER BETWEEN  
THE SECURITY COUNCIL AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The doctrine of collective security is a multilateral pact between states that any threat of aggression or attack on a member state would be presumed an attack on all the member states and would warrant their common action against that threat. The idea of a collective security approach to peace first appeared in the Treaty of Versailles that concluded World War I as the Allies pondered what measures needed to be installed to prevent such devastation from happening again.<sup>94</sup> Ever since then it has figured prominently in both diplomatic and academic discussions of international relations. President Woodrow Wilson lauded it as “the basis, the only conceivable basis, for the future peace of the world.” The international organizations that emerged following both world wars were conceived, in part, as experiments in the formation of a collective security system and the UN is no exception. The UN Charter codifies the most widely accepted conception of universal collective security. Briefly stated in article 2 (5), and articulated in more detail in Chapter VII of the document, the Charter stated that:

All Members of the United Nations, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces, assistance, and facilities, including rights of passage, necessary for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Edwin M. Smith and Micheal G. Schechter. *The United Nations in a New World Order*. (The Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies. Monograph Series, Number Six, 1994) 3; Sheik Ali Sheik, *The International Organizations and World Order Dictionary* (1992) 35-36; Inis Claude. *American Approaches to World Affairs: The Credibility of Institutions, Policies and Leadership*. Vol. 4. (Lanham, New York, London: University Press of America, 1986)

<sup>95</sup> Charter of the United Nations, Article 2

As evidenced here, Chapter VII of the Charter sought to establish a collective security process, whereby the Security Council acted on behalf of all the members of the UN. Moreover, it was believed that these select few could act in unison, according to the universal interests of the organization and therefore all members were asked to respect the wishes of the Security Council and follow its recommendations. If the Security Council declared a situation worthy of UN intervention, members were expected to supply the necessary resources. The abundance of instances (some of which are explained above) where members of the Security Council have blocked UN initiatives that were in conflict with their national interests, suggests that those who negotiated it had a more limited purpose in mind. They sought to ensure that the enforcement process preserved the freedom of action for the victors in the post-war world.<sup>96</sup>

Recognizing the contradiction in the UN Charter between the equality of states and their inequality of power, a noted British military analyst wrote that the UN “failed in its primary task. It has not created a new world order in which every state derives security from the collective strengths of the whole. It reflects the disorders, fears, and rivalries of the world as it is, and does what it can to mitigate them.”<sup>97</sup> This tendency manifests itself in three places in the Charter: the incapacity of the General Assembly to make binding decisions in political matters, the requirement of unanimity by the permanent members of the Security Council, and the right of parties of disputes to a veto.<sup>98</sup> Giving leading states permanent membership and a veto in the Security Council, and confining the General

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<sup>96</sup> Smith, 21

<sup>97</sup> Micheal Howard, *The UN and International Security*; as cited in Smith, 7

<sup>98</sup> Morgenthau, Hans. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1966) 259

Assembly to a advisory role, clearly represents a deliberate choice to give dominant states the sanction to block any initiative that is not in line with their national interests. During the Cold War this blocking capacity was continuously evident, confining the UN to the margins of the global peace and security activities.<sup>99</sup> But it is not only in its formal structure that the UN experiences the geopolitical imprint of inequality among states. The role and selection of the members of the Security Council, the organization's financing (especially of special budgets needed for peace-keeping), the selectivity practiced with respect to approving UN peace-keeping and humanitarian interventions, the implementation (or lack thereof) of Security Council decisions, and even its location in New York City represent a particular bent towards specifically American demands. Because of their ascendancy in the UN, leading states have shared a continuing reluctance to endow the organization with autonomous capabilities either in relation to financing or to enforcement.<sup>100</sup> Their concern is that a volunteer UN peace force would be less agreeable to geopolitical control, especially with respect to implementation of Security Council mandates. As a result, the last fifty years of the UN's short life has seen an uneven response to international aggression in favor of the interests' of the permanent states that sit on the Security Council.

The argument presented thus far has been essentially structural but there are normative implications of the unequal distribution of powers in the UN that merit attention. Spearheaded by the most powerful states on the Security Council, the organization has become an instrument manipulated by their priorities. The short-term ramifications of this

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<sup>99</sup> Falk, *Predatory Globalization: A Critique*. (Cambridge, Oxford, Maryland: Polity Press, 1999) 22

<sup>100</sup> Falk, *A Study of Future Worlds*, 630

are that the UN's role in matters of global security is severely constrained in situations where these states do not perceive their strategic interests at stake. The long-term implication is that it gives the more powerful states a platform with which to shape other countries by influencing their economic, social or political identities. In much the same way Alexander Wendt discussed how realism shaped modern political discourse, Robert Cox comments on how one ideology is able to circumvent others. He submits that:

No ontology or epistemology is privileged in an absolute sense as being superior to others in terms of logic, reason, or ethical position. Some, however, are definitely privileged in terms of power. The ontology and the epistemology of the powerful become what are "natural" for their societies. Perspectives of the less powerful are derided as irrational, ultimately forgotten, "occulted," whether they are those of subordinated social groups or civilizations. There is an issue of empowerment in knowledge – a politics of knowledge.<sup>101</sup>

Another way of understanding this idea is to realize that the ideas advanced by the world's powers dominate *not* because they are intrinsically superior in form and content to the beliefs, traditions, ideas, and values of other societies, but because the mightier nations have historically had the strength to overpower those other societies. Cox's statement is especially resonant when viewed as a causal link to Wendt's constructivist critique of realism that society's value structure is shaped by its context. Cox would argue that after World War II the Allies constructed a geopolitical landscape that served their needs, leaving subsequent generations an inter-state system that appears to be the most logical means of organizing and governing the world because that is all they know.

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<sup>101</sup> Robert Cox, ed. *The New Realism: Perspectives on Multilateralism and World Order*. (Paris, New York, Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997) xxii

During WWII, the formulation of the plan for the UN system of international organizations was dominated by the US and the UK, and the Charter of the UN negotiated at the San Francisco conference of 1945 bears unmistakable signs of its Anglo-American origins. From its opening words “we the peoples of the United Nations” onward through its provisions relating to human rights, socio-economic progress, peaceful settlement of disputes and collective security, the Charter serves as a transfer into international relations of the political and social principles that constitute the American agenda.<sup>102</sup> Since 1945, the Great 7 (G7) countries, the (seven principal trading partners of the World Trade Organization), have replaced the UK-US alliance as the powerful actors in the international system.<sup>103</sup> The G7’s main project is clearly statist and economically driven. They have defined the objectives of their development activities in terms of an increasingly globalized world economy. In their view, economic growth is equivalent to industrial expansion and further economic integration. They want to sustain geopolitical stability in order to preserve their supremacy, to continue the expansion of world trade and economic growth.<sup>104</sup> As one might expect, the G7, like their predecessors, are not content with the passive role of leading-by-example when it comes to foreign policy. The G7’s view that their society derives a distinctive virtue from their economic, political, and social values has led to a conviction that they bear a responsibility not only for achieving the realization of their values at home, but also for promoting the realization of those values abroad, and to these two purposes the UN can

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<sup>102</sup> Inis Claude, *States and the Global System: Politics, Law and Organization*. (London: The Macmillan Press, 1988) 105

<sup>103</sup> The states that constitute the G7 are France, the United States, Britain, Italy, Germany, Japan and Canada.

<sup>104</sup> Falk, *Predatory Globalization*, 12-13

be of assistance. As long as their sovereignty is not encroached upon, the powerful states see international organizations as helpful agents in their effort to spread the blessings of their society. International organizations, and especially the UN, act as exporting rather than importing agents by carrying western values into the multistate system and the domestic affairs of other states. UN authorization offers the added benefit of the certification of these values as internationally preferred, instead of simply US-preferred. In effect, this makes the development sector of the UN's activities an ideological arena dominated by modern Western, and therefore realist, discourse.<sup>105</sup>

Even if the transplantation of realist values into developing countries is not resisted, it may not be genuinely successful. The difficulty lies with the fact that the targets of the development activities are usually non-western societies whose problems are partly caused by the suppression of their traditional ways of doing things. They become increasingly dependent on G7 states, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank, for resources. The latter then convert their leverage into a relationship where certain neo-liberal economic policies are prerequisite for borrowed resources. This process, whereby one sector of the world is exploited by the dominant one, has been referred to by some scholars as the "new neo-colonialism."<sup>106</sup> The dependent status of developing nations entails a restriction of participation in the global decision-making process, and sometimes an inferiority complex resulting from the constructed belief that their way of doing things is inherently less valuable. These problems will continue to

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<sup>105</sup> Kinhide Mushakoji, *Multilateralism in a Multicultural World: notes for a theory of occultation*; as cited in Cox, 105

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

snowball until the pattern of influence is offset by the strengthening of a global democracy.

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## CONCLUSIONS

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The “Tragedy of the Commons” is a metaphor sometimes employed by philosophers and academics to illustrate the outcome of a situation in which a group of individuals share a common space. We can imagine a group of farmers who share a field where they let their sheep graze. There might be recommended guidelines for the most efficient use of the field so as to prevent its overgrazing but there is no authority that enforces how much each farmer is allowed to let his sheep graze. The farmer, acting rationally, will naturally let his sheep graze as much as they want because there is no incentive for him not to. In the end, the field is destroyed because all the farmers acted in the same way, satisfying their short-term interests without consideration and appreciation for the long-term implications of their behavior. In the absence of a sovereign authority that can manage the efficient use of a shared resource, the resource is threatened. The Tragedy of the Commons is a metaphor but its lesson rings true in numerous circumstances.

The earth is the common resource shared by all humans as well as millions of plant and animal species. Over time (but particularly in the last century), humankind’s pursuit of short-term and self-interested aims, which are often the manifestation of

realist principles, has destroyed valuable and sometimes irreplaceable resources when there has not been a sovereign authority empowered to manage this common space. The United Nations was established in order to preserve the “commons” of our planet but as its Charter and many declarations are not enforceable or backed by powerful disincentives, they are impotent in the face of self-serving states. Clearly the world cannot overcome the problems facing it unless a structure of global governance is created that is both democratic and empowered to take necessary actions. To make this possible, one must examine from where the problems originated. That is what this study has endeavored to do.

The problems arising within the UN having been created during the primacy of the realist school of thought but having to operate in a different political environment, have been the subject of the preceding chapters. By analyzing the origins of realism in western liberal heritage and in the Treaty of Westphalia I have shown that the inter-state world order is an amalgamation of various political, social, and ideological elements. I used Alexander Wendt’s theory of neo-constructivism to uncover the cycle that occurs when such an ontological structure is formed and its components serve as reinforcements of that structure giving those within it a false impression of permanence. By deconstructing the framework of the UN Charter to expose its realist underpinnings, I have proven the UN to be both a representation of and reinforcing agent to the realist ontology. Finally, I explored how these realist instruments have performed in the interdependent environment in which the UN now finds itself, positing that its foundation in realism has precluded it from achieving some of its central aims.

The field of research devoted to reforming international institutions continues to grow steadily and there are still many questions and problems that deserve attention. Most prior studies, like mine, have been dominated by theory, leaving a lot of room for detail-based, case study analyses in which different scenarios for world order and reforms are proposed and explored.

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## POSTSCRIPT

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### THE ROAD AHEAD

As delegates from around the world converged in Johannesburg to attend the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development sponsored by the United Nations, I had the opportunity to witness our global community and think about what progress, if any, has been made in adapting international institutions to the requirements of today. At first glance, the agenda seemed ambitious, with the eradication of poverty, hunger, armed conflicts and intolerance, being among the goals to which every attending government was asked to commit. While these objectives are commendable, the fact that states were merely *asked* to commit themselves is inadequate. Signing a benign agreement or convention has seldom proven to be enough incentive to desist from unsustainable practices. It bows to state sovereignty and delays the day when irresponsible leaders can be pressured or forcible removed from their posts.

There was, however, some indication that global leaders are beginning to wipe the realist and Westphalian sleep from their eyes and acknowledge some new trends in global politics. In fact, the summit's attendance roster shows that government representatives

were not the only attendees and were in the minority among the thousands of INGO and NGO delegates and private citizens who came to the summit both to listen and be heard. This demonstrates that governments are realizing that they cannot fight the hard battles they face alone and are recognizing the meaningful role that non-state actors can play in affecting change. In an address to the NGO and INGO representatives that constituted the “Civil Society” division of the summit, Secretary-General Kofi Annan concurred that: “Civil society’s presence has widened and deepened the work of the UN constellation . . . and we would not be able to build a more liberal and liveable society without civil society and the legions of volunteers it brings.”<sup>106</sup> He added that, “there will be times when old strategies are good and times when new ones will be needed and it is imperative that we calibrate all of the strategies and actors involved.” His last remark is encouraging as it indicates his willingness to try new ways to policy-making.

In addition to providing a glimpse of the current situation, the summit also gave us a preview of the future as we move closer to the reality of “one world.” The signs are mixed. On the one hand, the summit’s diversity of participants (culturally and politically) suggests the possibility that we are moving away from a Security Council dominated society, and away from their realist tendencies. On the other hand, few issues can be properly addressed in large forums such as a world summit. Some questions arise: are certain issues handled better by one large governing body or are they better left in the hands of local authorities who are better acquainted with the subtleties of their context? And as world governance becomes further concentrated in fewer hands, will the interests

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<sup>106</sup> Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, in an address to Civil Society at Nazrec Conference Center, Johannesburg, South Africa. September 2, 2002

of those peoples that have hitherto operated on the periphery of global development be increasingly sidelined, while the realist policies of the most powerful get more attention? These are important questions that challenged global leaders at the summit but which should not be left to them to answer. Individuals have a responsibility to claim a democratic entitlement to participate in global decisions that affect their lives.

The following paragraphs discuss my recommendations for reforms that would address the inconsistencies created by realism's presence in today's interdependent society and encourage a more effective, representative, accountable, and democratic UN system. Each recommendation could be an entire research study unto itself, and it is beyond the scope of this inquiry to examine them in great detail. At the same time I believe my analysis of certain problems inherent in the UN's structure would be incomplete without a short discussion of possible solutions.

It is first necessary to decide on the appropriate approach to reform. Some will argue that since the shortcomings of the UN stem from the international system in which it functions, this system should be replaced before a new institution is built. In other words, to grow a successful crop, one must first weed the entire garden and put down fresh soil before planting new seeds. This is certainly the preferable solution but it is not realistic when dealing with such a large and pervasive context as world order. The realist traditions are too embedded in the inter-state system to be replaced abruptly. Reform is a process, not an event, and is best completed in stages, using the current framework as the starting point. This avoids potential trauma caused by a sudden transformation, which is

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in fact impossible, and should also make it easier to handle problems as they arise. What can be extracted, however, from the system-first approach is that any successful attempt at reforming the UN should view the organization as an outgrowth of the system in which it is a part. And therefore any suggested reforms must have the bettering of the entire system of global governance as a simultaneous goal.

After deciding on the overall approach, the next step in the reformation process is creating a core set of principles that will constitute the framework and standards with which a new world institution is constructed and which will inform the system of governance that takes shape. To address the problems discussed in the preceding chapters, I have four suggestions.

Providing civil society with an official platform to voice its ideas and concerns is an important step towards changing the UN to reflect the decision-making structure of today's society. This could involve the creation of an agency where NGOs, so-called grass-roots organizations and small enterprises are asked to actively participate in the affairs of the UN. Institutionalizing civil society and integrating such an agency in the workings of the UN has been pioneered by C.O.N.G.O (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the UN), an organization that facilitates the participation of NGOs in UN debates and decisions. Civil society is indeed massive, much larger than the comparatively small group of two hundred states, and the real challenge to this reform would be how best to manage and incorporate its vastness into a deliberate body like the UN.

A truly democratic institution is a governing body of individuals that represent the wishes of the “demos” or “people.” This has best been achieved in other contexts through direct elections of representatives. Up to this point, state ambassadors to the UN have been appointed by their respective government of origin. To strengthen the democratic character of the UN, these positions should be elected ones, thereby making UN delegates more accountable to citizens and less so to governments. The drawbacks of this approach are that it is still rooted in western ideology in the same way realism was. Constitutional democracy is an American idea. This paper recognized the problems that arose after the Treaty of Westphalia when Europeans divided their continent into sovereign units and colonialism allowed them to stamp that organizing principle on the rest of the world. There is little difference between that process and the one proposed here which encourages a world functioning according to the American system of governance. A future study might consider the perspectives of world order that emanate from non-western civilizations. Robert Cox is one of the leaders in this field and has presided over several symposiums sponsored by the UN University that have brought together scholars from around the world to discuss the form, content and implications of a new world order based on the perspectives of many different societies. Richard Falk, in his work *A Study of Future Worlds*, has also made an attempt to map a different world system. Most of these studies are still in the conceptual stages and have not yet considered strategies and tactics.

One of the most damaging realist principles that this paper identified is the UN's blind commitment to sovereignty. The cases of Rwanda and Zimbabwe demonstrate that the human price of sovereignty is too large. An improved UN system needs an ethical and legal framework with which to enforce its mandate and make leaders accountable to the agreements they sign. If a state or individuals in a government act negligently there must be mechanisms of punishment that can quickly eliminate the trouble and discourage others from such behavior. The UN will continue to be financed by state governments but if the latter do not pay their dues (as has been a problem in the past) then their membership will be terminated. The UN might not have money or power at this point but it has muscle in the form of legitimacy which can be used to motivate governments who are already realizing the benefits of multilateralism over bilateral and unilateral methods. The UN's supranational powers as a disciplinary agent will not compromise a state's ability to govern the domestic affairs of the state. Even though this change would move the UN away from the supremacy of governments, the world would still be organized according to territorial interests which foster the "my" interests versus "your" interests phenomenon which precipitates conflict. Another study might look at other ways of organizing society, possibly according to several large topics of mutual interest to everyone and have regional and local structures of governance in which representatives are elected into office. The UN's various programs (UN Development Program, UN Environmental Program, World Food Program, etc.) could be the basis for these topic areas.

In order to combat the unequal distribution of power between the Security Council and the General Assembly yet recognize the efficiency gained from having a smaller decision-making body, I propose that the members of the Secretariat assume the tasks of the Security Council. This will shift the emphasis away from an atmosphere where issues are debated according to the different interests of various parties to one that is more objective. Theoretically, the primary charge of the Secretariat is to act in the best interest of the collective. Historically this has proved true and the Secretariat has been one of the more forward-thinking and progressive divisions of the UN. In addition, the Security Council's supremacy could be softened by removing the veto-power of the its permanent members which would prevent parties from blocking those UN initiatives that are not in their interests.

Now that a system-oriented approach to reform and a set of reforms has been recommended, one must design a plan of action. This paper has argued that the UN Charter formed the core ideology and architecture of the UN and that it contained inconsistencies and contradictions by simultaneously endeavoring to transcend realism and preserve several of realism's major tenets. A truly reformed UN will only follow once a new or significantly revised Charter has been created that takes into account the problems discussed in this paper.

Amending the UN Charter is presently the only legitimate modifying vehicle recognized by the current inter-state system and is a feasible means toward building an improved structure of global governance. The amendment process was included in the Charter

under Article 109 which stipulates that two-thirds of the General Assembly can call a Charter Review Conference. This is one of the rare instances when the veto (by one of the permanent members of the Security Council) does not apply. Once the Charter Review Conference has been called, two-thirds of the conference delegates can adopt a new or comprehensively amended Charter and, once again, the veto does not apply. Once a new or amended charter has been adopted by the Charter Review Conference, two-thirds of the General Assembly can put it into effect by ratifying it. At this point, all the permanent members of the Security Council must ratify the charter amendments before they are accepted which could potentially be a problem. But, once the Charter Review Conference has been called and the conference adopts a new charter, the momentum will hopefully be great enough that the members of the Security Council will be persuaded to ratify.

What I have described does not intend to be a panacea but a crucial first step toward building a better society. If implemented, it is my view that the UN can fulfill its potential of being an institution where the interests of “we the peoples” are advanced as opposed to the specific interests of “we the powerful” which has been the case until now.

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